

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 23 June 2021 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall, Witcham

Present: M Housden (Chairman), J Bibby, L Holdaway, K Mackender, S Wilkin

In attendance Mrs S J Bell (Clerk)
 Cllr L Duprè (CCC & ECDC)
 Cllr M Inskip (ECDC)
 2 members of public present

Chairman's Announcement: Chairman welcomed everyone to the first face to face meeting since March 2020 when Covid restrictions were introduced. The Coronavirus Act 2020 s.78 and The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 had expired on 6 May 2021 meaning remote meetings using video conferencing platforms were no longer lawful.

All future meetings would be held at the Village Hall, and all subject to the Covid-19 restrictions pertaining at the time of each meeting, including distancing, masks, hand sanitising, airflow, etc. Village Hall Covid-19 Risk Assessment provisions limit attendance to 15 people in the large hall in total.

In view of the Government's roadmap to the opening up day being moved from 19 June 2021 to later into July, the proposed public meeting for 7 July 2021 would be reviewed (Agenda item 21/113).

Members of the public were welcome to attend any of the Council meetings but must contact the Clerk before the meeting so that arrangements can be made to accommodate up to 15 people.

Action

21/102 **Apologies for absence:** received and accepted from J Lucas – previous commitment.

21/103 **Declarations of Interest**
 Councillors to declare any pecuniary interests in any items on the agenda - none
 Councillors to declare any personal interests in any items on the agenda – M Housden – Agenda Items 21/110 Planning applications 10A The Slade (neighbour) and 21/115 Residents comments – Camping Site, The Slade; and he said he would leave the meeting for these two items and hand over the Chair to K Mackender
 Councillors to declare any prejudicial interests in any items on the agenda and to inform the Chairman if they wish to speak on the matter during public participation - none

21/104 **Dispensations:**
 To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

21/105 **Public Participation**
 Ref item 21/116, the Village Hall Chairman reported that the website for the Village Hall was now live <https://www.witchamvillagehall.org> and sharing information and links between this and the new parish council website was discussed. Clerk confirmed the Council's new website would have a link to the Village Hall website as discussed and agreed early in the project. She also confirmed she could forward general news items to the Village Hall Chairman for inclusion from time to time on their website.

21/105 **Public Participation** (cont)

Clerk had asked Village Hall for names of village organisations using the hall so that information could be included on the Council's website as an information point on facilities in the village. Village Hall Chairman advised there were 3 regular users at present and these were listed on their website.

Resident with planning application for change of use of existing timber cabin from garden room to drinking establishment was attending to enable Councillors to ask any questions about the application (Item 21/110). He also asked about residents' concerns regarding camping events at Slade Paddock.

L Holdaway gave the details of concerns voiced to her following Whitsun Bank Holiday, and the Clerk had received a suggestion for planting of bigger trees and hedgerows to conceal the site. It was noted that a tree planting screening scheme had been implemented in previous years but of course these would take some time to reach full grown maturity. The resident reported that an error on the online booking system had been dealt with and there was positive feedback from visitors with many making return visits. People in the village had also been very supportive, including attending some organised events over the years. The pub had not yet re-opened following Covid restrictions and the proprietors were reported as supporting the events at the site. K Mackender asked if there was any number restrictions on people on site and the meeting was advised that none had been given, and activities were bound by the current prevailing Covid-19 restrictions.

21/106 **Minutes**

Minutes of the meeting of 5 May 2021, previously circulated, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, and the agenda of the same date signed by the Chairman as confirmation of the business transacted at that meeting. Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Bibby.

7.55pm Village Hall Chairman left the meeting, and she was thanked for attending.

21/107 **Matters Arising from previous minutes**

21/089 Village Hall Committee Defibrillator Location Notice. Clerk confirmed notices had been placed on the main noticeboard at the crossroads and in the bus shelter noticeboard as instructed at the last meeting, after consulting with the Village Hall Chairman. L Holdaway presented a pre-printed location form notice which had been given to her by a member of the public – this would need to go to Village Hall Committee.

21/099 Community Archive Group subscription fee for County Council Village Archive website. Clerk confirmed the cheque had cleared the account and suggested this transaction should be under LGA1972 s.137.

21/108 **Reports from District and County Councillors**

The reports had been previously circulated. Parish Councillors had been invited to contact the District and County Councillors direct with any questions prior to the meeting, to save time in the meeting, which was to be short in compliance with Covid restrictions. The Chairman had raised the following points:

Car-racing/drifted Elean Business Park 5/6 June and 12/13 June 2021.

L Duprè advised a meeting was being set up with the Police again.

Road surface storm water not getting away. L Duprè advised that grips were now being cut by the County Council at various locations and

21/108 **Reports from District and County Councillors** (cont)

she was making enquiries regarding what was happening about grips more generally.

Elean Business Park roundabout and Haddenham-Witcham Toll road mitigation measures to reduce queue length. M Inskip advised that there appeared to be no traffic modelling identified issues with queue length on approach to Witcham Toll from The Slade.

Road surface noise on A142 – could smooth surfaces be used at Witchford, Wentworth, Witcham, Sutton and Mepal instead of the rough surface treatment as the latter is noticeably noisier? M Inskip advised the road surface noise related to the housing development on the old Mepal Airfield and it was likely a physical barrier between the new houses and road would be used, together with locating houses sufficiently far from the road.

8.07pm District and County Councillors were thanked and they left.

21/109 **Policies and Risk Assessments**

Clerk had given apologies that due to current workload with year-end activities, Covid-19 and meetings, she had been unable to undertake further work on policies. The Risk Assessment for Return to Face to Face meetings had been circulated on 18 June 2021 for review and adoption tonight.

Resolved to adopt the Risk Assessment for Return to Face to Face meetings with no amendments required, and subject to review pending future Government Covid-19 restriction measures. Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin

21/110 **Planning Applications**

The Chairman proposed taking Hillcrest and Pond Farm applications first and he would then hand over the Chair to K Mackender to deal with application and residents' concerns for Slade Paddock so he could leave the room, and this was agreed.

21/00870/FUL Land west of Hillcrest, Mepal Road 1 No dwelling (phased development plot 3) following outline consent 19/01045/OUT

Resolved that the Council had no concerns on this application. Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Bibby.

Clerk

21/00533/VAR Pond Farm 21 High Street To vary Condition 1 (approved drawings) for Plot 2 of previously approved 16/01567/FUL for residential development for three houses plus garages and change of use of existing agricultural barn along with new vehicular accesses to 21 High Street and plot 2.

Resolved that the Council had no concerns and supported the original planning application and consent. It very much supports the comments made by the ECDC Conservation Officer dated 20 May 2021, including that Plot 2 occupies an important position in the streetscape and was designed to be of sufficient quality to fulfil that responsibility. Further noted a) that removal of the hedge on boundary with Headleys Lane, previously reported to planning authority as was more than agreed on original planning consent. b) The development of this whole site on the corner of High Street and Headleys Lane has been controversial so the Parish Council wants to see compliance with Conditions and the original scheme as approved. Proposed K Mackender and L Holdaway.

Clerk

Resolved that the Clerk to also inform ECDC Planning and Enforcement officers that contractors were not complying with the approved traffic plan, ie vehicles were daily being parked on the grass verge and not within the site, and that bonfires were being lit within the zone of protection for trees

Clerk

21/110 **Planning Applications** (cont)

and hedges on site – this included materials brought in from other sites. Proposed Chairman, seconded J Bibby.

8.17pm M Housden handed over the Chair to K Mackender and left the meeting room.

21/00754/FUL 10A The Slade. Change of use of existing timber cabin from garden room to drinking establishment (bar)
K Mackender in the Chair

There was discussion, including about comments from some residents which had been reported to a councillor over the Whitsun Bank Holiday weekend. Concerns with if the granted licence was an open licence – the number of people likely to be present, the hours the licence covered and any impact on the future of the village pub. (Details of Licences on ECDC website).

Clerk advised the Council's comments on this application were required for change of use of cabin rather than terms of the licence, which had already been granted. K Mackender confirmed this requirement. L Holdaway said the terms of the licence granted were an important consideration for this application for change of use to a bar. S Wilkin had also heard comments from people and K Mackender confirmed he thought the licence was relevant.

The meeting opened to allow the resident to further respond during this time before closing for Council's decision.

Resolved to respond to application that there were concerns regarding

- if the licence (previously granted) is a full open licence, there were concerns about potentially high numbers of people that could attend and with it being long hours (9am to midnight) it would be longer hours than a public house.
- The Council was not refusing or objecting to the application but nonetheless is expressing the above concerns following concerns from some villagers. Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin. (3 for, 1 abstention)

Clerk

Following ECDC decision noted.

20/01193/FUL Hillcrest, Mepal Road 2 No dwellings (phased development plot 1 and 2) – approved.

21/115 **Reports on Village Matters received from Residents****b) Camping Events Slade Farm**

Concerns regarding first opening over Whitsun Bank Holiday had been discussed at length during public participation and planning.

8.45pm the applicant left the meeting and M Housden returned to the meeting room.

a) **Request for kissing gate on Public Right of Way at the Headleys Lane end (from The Slade) and wildflower sowing for highway verges around the village**

The public right of way, which included crossing fields, was being used by motorbike riders. The Headleys Lane end up to the fields, had been allowed to become overgrown with a canopy but should landowners want access to fields for machinery they would still need access so a kissing gate would be difficult. The fields in the vicinity had recently been sold and the new owners were not known. Clerk advised that the County Council and landowners would need to be consulted for agreement. There was concern about planting up some verges through the village since in some

21/115 **Reports on Village Matters received from Residents** (cont)

places paths were narrow and existing vegetation overhung and caused temporary obstructions for pedestrians, pushchairs etc and obscured visibility in respect of wildlife stepping out into road for vehicles on the main roads into village.

Clerk to advise resident that contact details for current landowners adjoining the public right of way were not known at present, nor was what access they would require. Therefore decision for a kissing gate could not be made. Also, resident to be asked for further details on specific areas where wildflower sowing was being suggested and to bring these proposals to a future Council meeting.

Clerk

Referring back to the event at The Slade over the Whitsun Bank Holiday, it was noted that young people were allegedly causing a nuisance on the recreation ground and on the streets after this event. It had since been found the youngsters had come in from a neighbouring village and a further incident also involved children from outside of the village

9pm K Mackender passed the Chair back to M Housden

21/111 **Recreation Ground**

- a) Monthly report on weekly inspections. Nil problems to report and confirmation that Covid sign up. Annual inspection 21 June 2021, report awaited.
- b) New play equipment and safety surfacing. L Holdaway had contacted two companies. She was meeting one on 6 July at 11.30am to discuss possible options and get ball-park figure for costs, and K Mackender would also attend. Examining year-end ear-marked reserves for the project, Clerk confirmed the Council had set aside £12,397 for this project including CIL monies, and ECDC Rural Grant. Match-funding, and other, grant schemes were required to meet the costs of all the works.

*LH/KM*21/112 **Councillor's Annual Village Inspection**

Report of inspection of 18 May 2021 had been circulated and Clerk sought guidance on actions to be carried out from the inspection:

2No seats adjacent village hall roadway. Clerk suggested new replacement seats should be included in the recreation ground play project and Chairman said he would monitor the seats over the coming weeks and remove from site if necessary.

Chairman

Signboard on entrance to recreation ground. Enquiries to be made regarding ownership and repairs.

Clerk

Cemetery gate – J Bibby reported that the gate hinge had been repaired and she would arrange for graves to be topped up with topsoil where needed. Clerk reminded the meeting that earlier investigations for a small inexpensive noticeboard at the cemetery to house information setting out cemetery rules had not been successful and asked this be brought forward again. Chairman said he would look into this and also doing up the village noticeboard at the crossroads.

*Chairman**Chairman*

21/113 **Public Meeting Wednesday 7 July 2021 – Village Projects**

With the deferment of the Government's original roadmap proposal to make 21 June 2021 the opening up day for England, and it now being deferred to possibly 19 July 2021 but to be reviewed 2 weeks earlier, the Council had to consider whether or not to postpone the public meeting scheduled for 7 July. Under the Covid-19 restrictions the Village Hall Committee had limited the capacity of the main hall to 15 people including Councillors and staff. Information about the proposed meeting had been published on the Council's website and noticeboards, and also in the June newsletter to householders. The Clerk suggested amending the meeting to a controlled walk-through session, perhaps a Saturday morning, with a couple of councillors present on a rotating basis and information about the trees, play equipment, MVAS results, website and Witcham Archive Group displayed and an invite for attendees to write down their comments.

After discussion it was unanimously agreed to adhere to the 7 July for this community engagement meeting. L Holdaway to present play equipment project and Clerk to work with J Bibby to put information together about the recommended tree varieties. Clerk to check if representative from Witcham Archive Group would attend and prepare information regarding Council's new website.

*LH
JB
Clerk
Archive
Grp*

L Holdaway reported that she had been approached by a resident who was keen to help with the tree project, in particular to engage with the recently launched national 'Queens Canopy' project. She had suggested to the resident that they attend this public meeting to discuss the ideas with the public and Councillors. People must inform Clerk prior to the meeting date so the Council can manage numbers attending in accordance with the Village Hall Committee's Risk Assessment and terms and conditions of hire during Covid-19 restrictions.

21/114 **Finance**a) **Receipts and Payments June**

Receipts and payments schedule for June 2021 had been circulated. Cheques and supporting documents had been checked by signatories and confirmed correct.

Resolved to approve the receipts and payments for June and release cheques. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded J Bibby.

Resolved - confirmation that the Council in accordance with its powers under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 should incur the following expenditure, which in the opinion of the Council is in the interests of the area or its inhabitants and will benefit them in a manner commensurate with expenditure - £110 for Witcham Archive Group subscription to County Council Community Archive website, as discussed (Items 21/107 and 21/099). Proposed Chairman, seconded L Holdaway.

Clerk

b) **2020/21 Year-end Accounts Audit Processes**

The internal audit had been carried out on 6 May 2021, and the report received on 18 June 2021 and circulated to Councillors. Noted that Box L on the Internal Auditor's Report page of the AGAR form stated that not all year-end documents were published on the website.

Clerk explained that the 2019/20 notice and AGAR documents were not visible on the Witcham.org.uk website on inspection by the Internal Auditor on 6 May 2021. Agendas and Minutes, including receipts and payments were visible. She had provided evidence that the year-end documents had been published on 27

21/114 **Finance** (cont)**2020/21 Year-end Accounts Audit Processes** (cont)

July 2020 in accordance with regulations. The existing website unfortunately only permits limited items to be shown under news and this item had eventually dropped out of view after some weeks. The situation had been rectified by re-posting again on 6 May 2021. Once the new purpose built website was launched there would be an area and capacity to keep documents on view for longer periods. A note of explanation on this point would be published with this year's documents.

Resolved to accept the Internal Auditor's report. Proposed Chairman, seconded K Mackender.

Clerk

The Clerk reported that the Notice for public inspection would be displayed from 24 June 2021 for period 28 June to 6 August 2021, together with AGAR documents.

Resolved to approve the Notice for public inspection and that the Annual Governance Statement and Statement of Accounts together with Certificate of Exemption (AGAR) and supporting documents, 5 May 2021, be confirmed. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded J Bibby.

21/116 **Website**

Clerk reported that the web designers were still working on completion and handover.

*Clerk*21/117 **Community Police**

Other than vehicle racing/driftting at the Elean Business Park covered under District and Councillor reports, there was no further matters brought forward for discussion.

21/118 **Village Hall AGM – 29 June 2021**

It was confirmed that the nominated representative for the Village Hall Committee, J Bibby, would attend the Annual General Meeting. Clerk to complete form. Chairman said he would be attending as a resident to support the Village Hall

*Clerk*21/119 **Street Lights and Highways**

- a) Noted that the streetlight at The Slade, which had been removed by Highway utility works had been reinstated.
- b) Westway Place – broken street light – Sanctuary had confirmed the order for replacement column and lamp to replace broken system on middle carpark. The old light had still not been removed on the bottom carpark. All these items were still being pursued by the Clerk.
- c) Chairman had circulated report on results of MVAS data collection and these were briefly discussed with a view to asking the Police to undertake speed-checks at some point in the future.

*Clerk*21/120 **Cemetery Management**

Request for erection of a double and single memorial plaques on Garden of Remembrance wall was received.

Resolved to approve the two plaques as per details provided. Proposed S Wilkin, seconded J Bibby.

Clerk

21/121 **Correspondence**

The following had been previously circulated and noted:
 'Happy and Healthy in East Cambs' Integrated Neighbourhood event on 7th July 2021. No Councillor nominated
 EDCD Parish and Community Forum meeting 18 May 2021 – updates for information
 East Cambridgeshire Coordination Hub – Parish Mapping Survey 31.5.21 – no response received
 EDCD Welcome Back Fund – safe return to High Streets post-Covid restrictions
 EDCD Leader of the Council Newsletter
 Neighbourhood Plan – pre-consultation for parish of Reach – no comment
 NALC Coronavirus Bulletins, including support for Environment Bill, boost Parish Council work – no comment
 NALC Chief Executive Weekly Bulletins
 NALC Monthly Newsletter
 CAPALC Monthly Bulletins
 CAPALC Training sessions – Councillor training, Code Conduct, Return to Face to Face meeting. No one to attend.
 Cambridgeshire Home Energy Support Service (CHESS), Cambridgeshire ACRE – details posted on noticeboards
 IHMC Incident Reports April and May
 CCC Highway Events June
 CCC Micro Asphalt/Gripfibre Surface Treatment Program updates across the county.
 CCC/EDCD Lets Talk About Loneliness – survey – no comment.
 Cambridgeshire Pension Fund stakeholders consultation – no comment.
 CCC Street light attachments – consents required.
 East Cambs Youth Strategy and Opportunities – no comment.
 Mid Anglia Centre of the Caravan and motor home club – request for suitable village sites – confirmed none in Witcham.
 Police and Crime Commissioner virtual round table meeting on 5 July 2021- no one nominated to attend.
 Enquiry regarding sale of field East of The Slade used by residents for dog-walking. Clerk reported that the resident had been advised the land had not been sold by the Parish Council. It had been owned by the Church Commissioners and sold at auction (4 paddocks). L Holdaway advised the information pack on the auctioneer's website was incomplete and said she expected the Land Registry entry would be made for the new owner by around 30 June 2021. Part of the parcel had been used by dogwalkers for over 30 years. Council to keep under review.

Clerk

Cllrs

- 21/122 **Exclusion of the Press and Public: Resolved** that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted at Agenda Item 21/123, namely staff matters, it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be temporarily excluded from this meeting and they are herewith instructed to withdraw. Proposed by Chairman and unanimously agreed.
 There were no members of the public present (9.43pm)

21/123 **Clerk's Additional Hours**

Report of hours worked over the preceding months had been previously circulated together with balance on salary budget heading carried forward from previous and this year's Precept had been circulated in previous months.

21/123 **Clerk's Additional Hours**

Resolved that payment be made for 29 additional hours to cover some of the work required for Covid-19 administrative work and the new website. Proposed K Mackender, seconded L Holdaway.

Additional hours to be reviewed monthly and Clerk to ask if ECDC Covid-19 grant monies might be available to the Parish Council. *Clerk*

21/124 **Date of next meeting:** 14 July 2021, subject to compliance with Covid-19 restrictions. All business, including receipts and payments, to be considered at this meeting must be delivered to the Clerk at least 7 days prior to the meeting.

Review any actions – not done

Chairman closed the meeting at 9.59pm

June Schedule of Receipts and Payments

		£	£	£
Receipts	C E Fuller Funerals	200.00		200.00
Payments	001923 K& M half year maintenance	45.22	9.04	54.26
	001924 Clerks salary	239.16		239.16
	001925 LGPS	85.42		85.42
	001926 HMRC	179.20		179.20
	001927 Truelink grounds maintenance (May)	317.60	63.52	381.12
	d/d IONOS (May)	22.03	4.41	26.44
	d/d IONOS (June)	22.03	4.41	26.44
	001928 MiJan Internal Audit fee	75.00		75.00

Signed..... Dated